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LAW AT THE CENTRE

The publication of *Law at the Centre*, a volume to commemorate the jubilee of the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies and the inauguration of the Society for Advanced Legal Studies, provides both a history of the IALS and a guide to what the future may hold. The book contains 18 contributions, starting with a note from William Steiner, former librarian of the Institute, who came to England in 1938 as a refugee from Austria and was associated with the Institute in its early days. It concludes with a personal perspective on the future from the current Director, Professor Barry Rider.

Key developments in the Institute's recent past are recorded by the people who helped to shape them, such as Professor Avrom Sherr, who became the first holder of the Woolf Chair of Legal Education in 1995 and has overseen a wide range of projects dealing with both legal education and the legal profession. Two papers have been contributed by people with a long association with the Institute who are still involved with its activities.

Sir William Dale continues to preside over the Centre for Legislative Studies and its flagship course on legislative drafting, which Sir William himself conceived over 30 years ago when Harold Macmillan announced that the 'wind of change' was blowing through Africa 'whether we like it or not'. The withdrawal of law officers belonging to the Colonial Legal Service created a demand for legal advice to the governments in the 10 'new' countries such as Malaysia, Nigeria and Jamaica. Over recent years Sir William and his staff have continued to train government lawyers from around the Commonwealth, and the course has been expanded to take account of the traditions of the civil law and the great codes. Staff from the centre have also contributed to programmes run by the Institute's International Professional Training Unit for legal officers from Central and Eastern Europe, and states working their way towards EU membership.

The Rt Hon Sir Robert Megarry has been a member of the Committee of the IALS for most of the first 40 years of its life. His contribution to *Law at the Centre* – 'Andorandorand' – is drawn from an (as yet) unpublished volume of *Miscellany-at-Law*, and in the author's words 'illustrates how, mainly in the Institute, a degree of recreational curiosity, both literal and linguistic, has been assuaged'. As befits a publication celebrating an institution that is both a national law library and a research centre, *Law at the Centre* contains papers covering a wide field of legal scholarship from such distinguished contributors as Professor Roy Goode (Proprietary rights and the unsecured creditor), Dr S M Cretney (Fifty years of family law), and Tony Weir (English tort law seen from abroad).

Looking ahead, Professor Rider stresses in his personal perspective on the future of the Institute the need for a rather closer relationship to be fostered with the profession and those involved in the administration of the law, while reaching out to scholars at both a national and international level.

LAW AT THE CENTRE

The Institute of Advanced Legal Studies at Fifty

Editor: **Barry AK Rider**

The Institute of Advanced Legal Studies was founded in 1947, although the idea to establish a national law library and centre for research was conceived over fifty years before this. Since its foundation the IALS has developed a library of international standing and has been able to foster and promote legal research not only in Britain but around the world. It performs a unique role in the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth and an increasingly important one in Europe.

To commemorate the Institute's jubilee and the inauguration of the Society for Advanced Legal Studies, Professor Barry AK Rider, the IALS's present Director, has assembled a series of papers which not only trace the Institute's development into an institution for the advancement of legal research of world class standing, but also illustrate the depth of support that it enjoys from some of the most distinguished and respected legal scholars of today. This volume is therefore a testament to the past and an indication of what the next fifty years will bring – with the Institute at the centre of advanced legal research in the United Kingdom.

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